



The Day My House Caught Fires

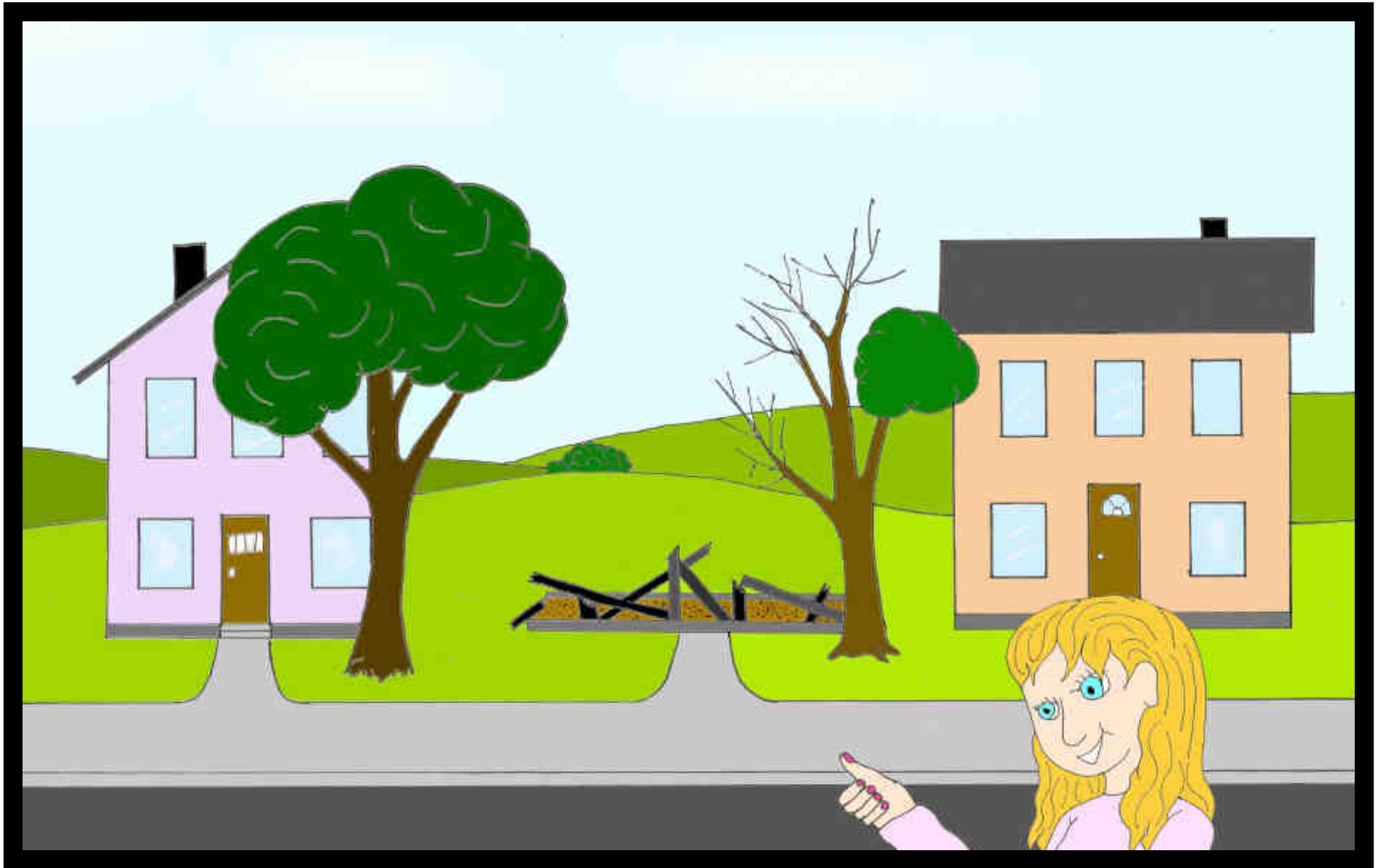
This book is a part of our child safety prevention program, developed and published by Global Children's Fund.

Every year, house fires claim the lives of as many as 800 children in the United States. They seriously injure several thousand more. This book is designed to give children valuable information on how to escape a house fire, in a fun manner that kids will remember.

For more information on this or other books in our child safety and sexual abuse prevention series, please visit:

www.KeepYourChildSafe.org

Thank you for taking the time to make safety a priority in your household.



Hey there friends. My name is Jenny. I have a story to tell you. But first I want to show you something. You see, this is where my house *used* to be.



Now I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that a giant tornado came and blew my house into another city. But that's not what happened. Or maybe you're thinking that we covered it in invisible paint. Or maybe you're thinking that we built our house out of sticks and the big, bad wolf came and blew it away. But that's not what happened either. Do you want to know what really happened?



You see, my house caught on fire, and it burned down to the ground. Everybody in my family got out safe, because we knew what to do. I'd like to tell you a story about that fire. But I gotta warn you, it's pretty scary in parts. But you all look pretty brave to me. You won't get scared, will you?



The story starts out a couple of weeks earlier. At my school, we learned what to do if there is a fire. We learned how to get out safe in a fire. We learned about firefighters. Good thing too, because little did I know that my own house would catch on fire before too long.



It started out one night, after I went to bed. I woke up in the middle of the night. There was an annoying beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, that just would not stop and woke me up! At first I was mad at the beep. At first I thought there was a *very large beep bird* outside my window that



was being **very rude**. But then I remembered... it was our smoke alarm! My mom had set it off for me a few weeks earlier, so that I could learn what it sounded like. Good thing too, because now it was going off, and I knew exactly what it meant. It meant that there was a fire in my house!



I could see there was smoke in my room. I was really scared, but then I remembered what to do. I knew better than to just sit up or jump out of my bed. At school, we learned how important it is to stay low in a fire. We learned that all the smoke and heat that can hurt us goes towards the ceiling. So I rolled over in my bed, without sitting up. I put my arm down, and slid myself onto the floor, just how I learned in school.



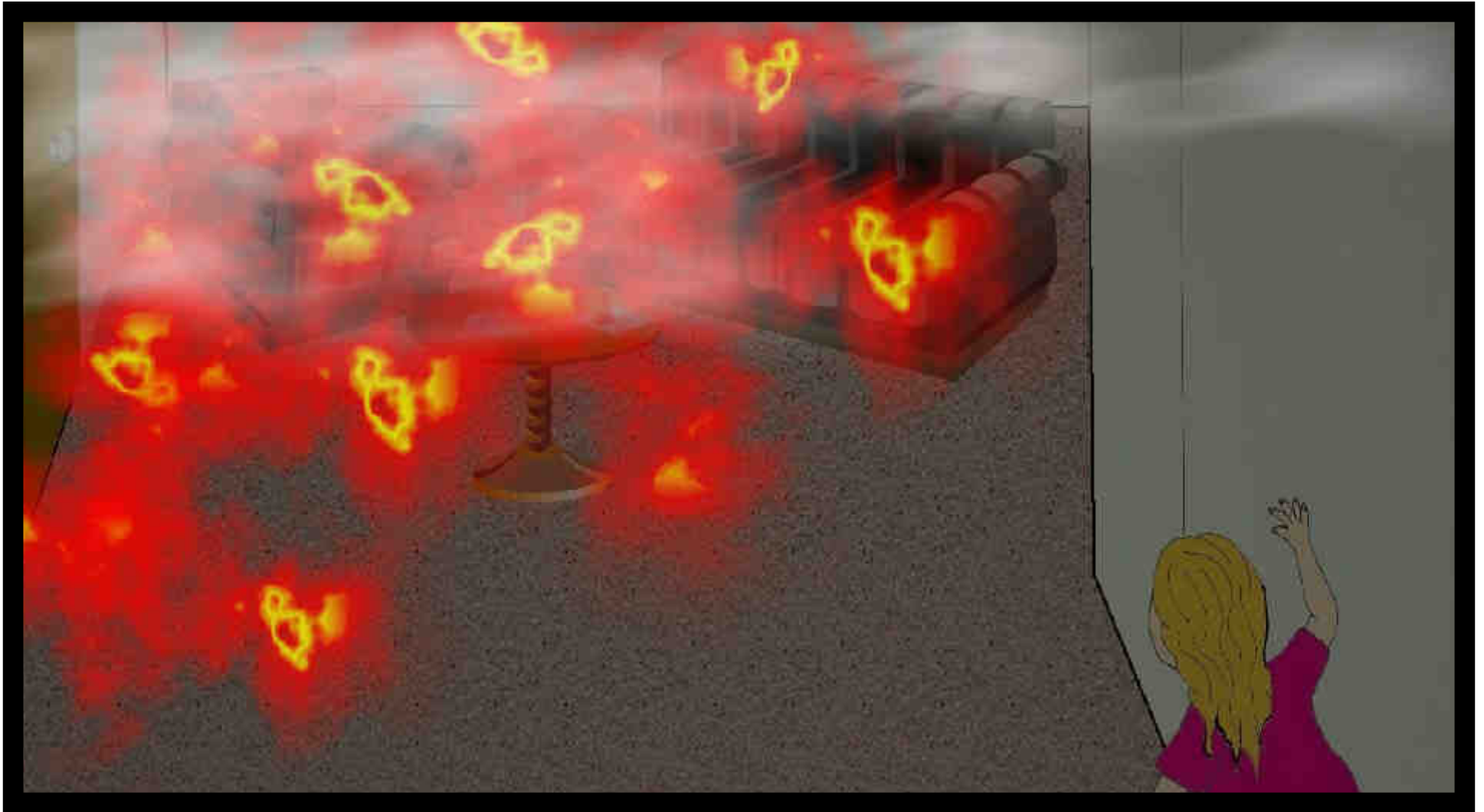
I knew that the most important thing was to get out fast. In school we learned how fast fire can spread once it gets going. So I didn't try to take my toys, I didn't try to get dressed, I didn't try to look for my bear, I knew I just had to get myself out right away.



I started to crawl. We learned how to do the fire crawl in our school. It's easy, and actually kind of fun. You just put your arms to the ground, put your nose to the carpet, and crawl around like a dog sniffing at something. I started to crawl out of my bedroom. I crawled down the stairs.



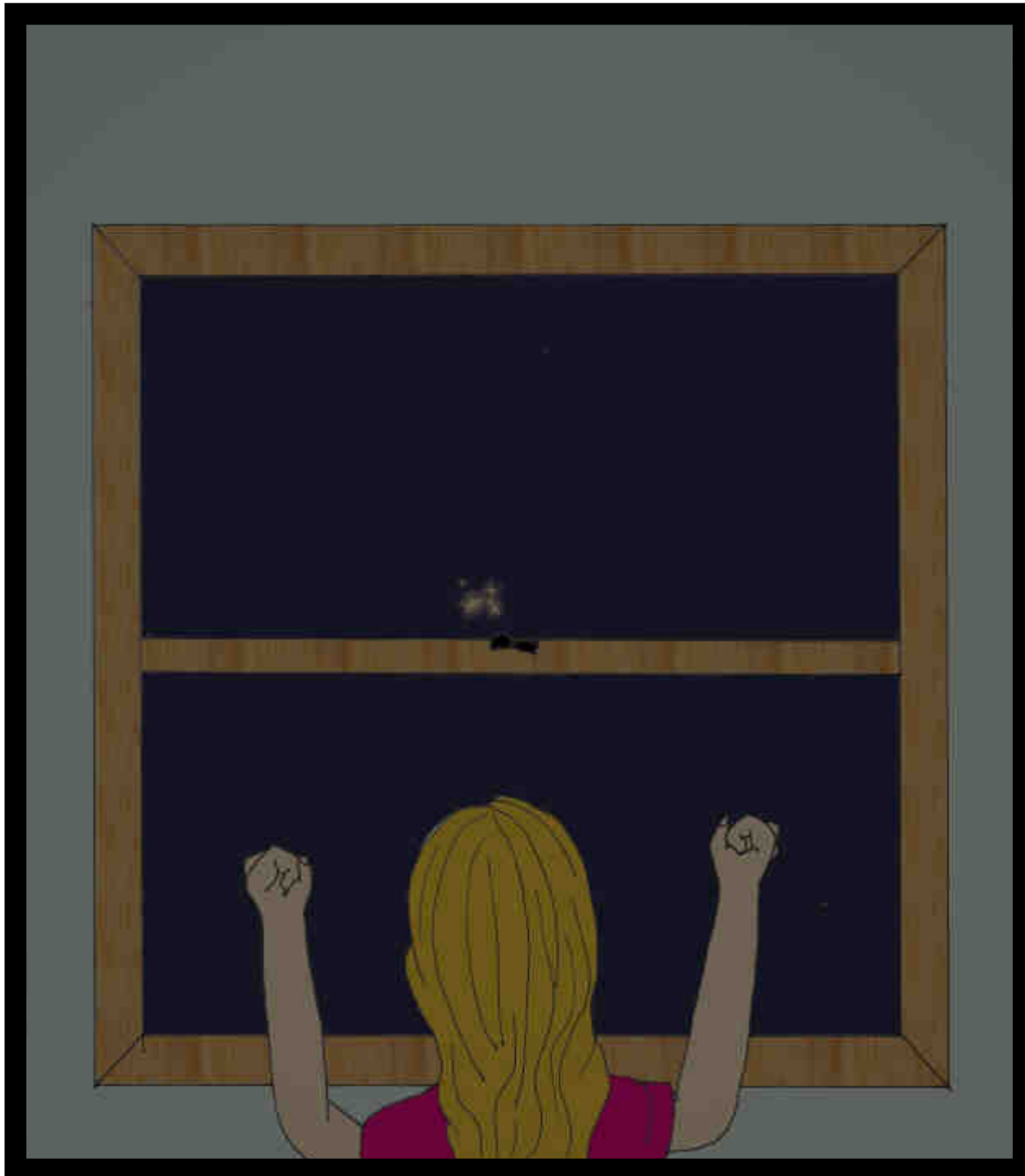
I started to crawl out towards the front door, but as I got closer, there was more and more smoke. It got hotter. I could see the fire, and it was blocking my front door! I knew that I had to find another way out of my house. So I turned around and started to head the other way, towards another door.



I kept crawling towards that door, but I could see there was fire in there too! This wasn't good. Those were the only two doors out of my house! I started to get really scared, but then I remembered what to do. I knew I had to find a window. Even better, I needed to try and find a room with a window and a door to it. I knew just the room!



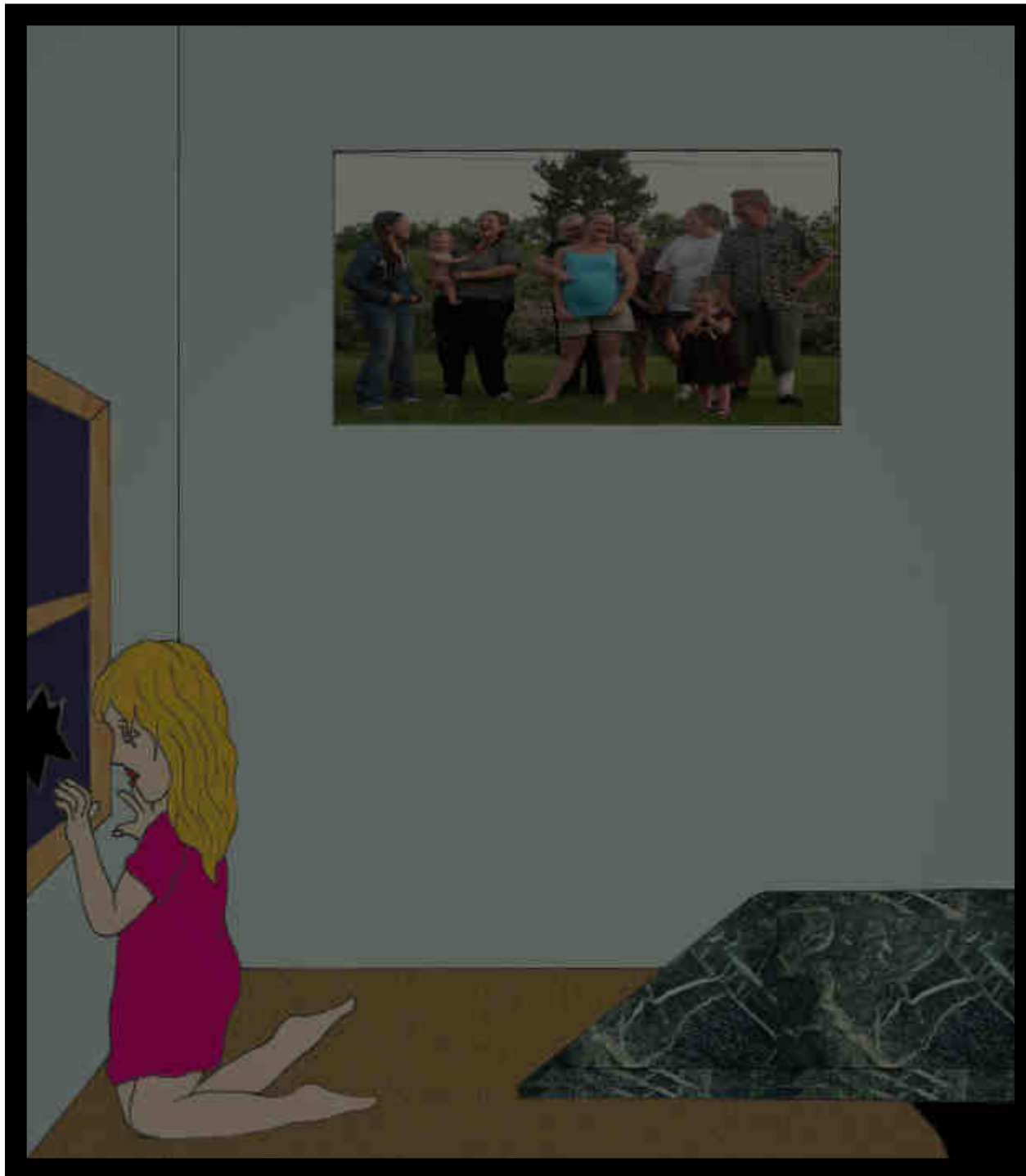
My dad's study had a window. It also had a door so that he could work without the noise from all of us kids playing. I headed towards that room. And good thing too, there was no fire in that room. I went inside, and I shut the door to help keep the fire and smoke out for as long as I could. I crawled to the window, and tried to open it.



I couldn't get it open. I tried to unlock it, but the latch was stuck. So I started to pound the glass with my hand so that if there was anyone outside they could help me. But nobody answered. So I grabbed something hard, and I threw it at the window as hard as I could to break the glass. I knew this was something you should only do as a last resort, but I needed a way to yell and breathe.



It broke a hole in the glass. This helped me to breathe a little better. I could stick my face up to the hole and breathe fresh air. I could also shout but nobody heard me at first. I kept shouting out the window for a couple of minutes, hoping someone would hear me.



Still nobody heard me. I started to get really scared, because I knew the fire was right outside the door now. I could hear it crackling right behind the door. I shouted again. I was getting ready to go find some more hard things so I could break the glass along the bottom of the window to climb out, but that's when a firefighter came around my way.



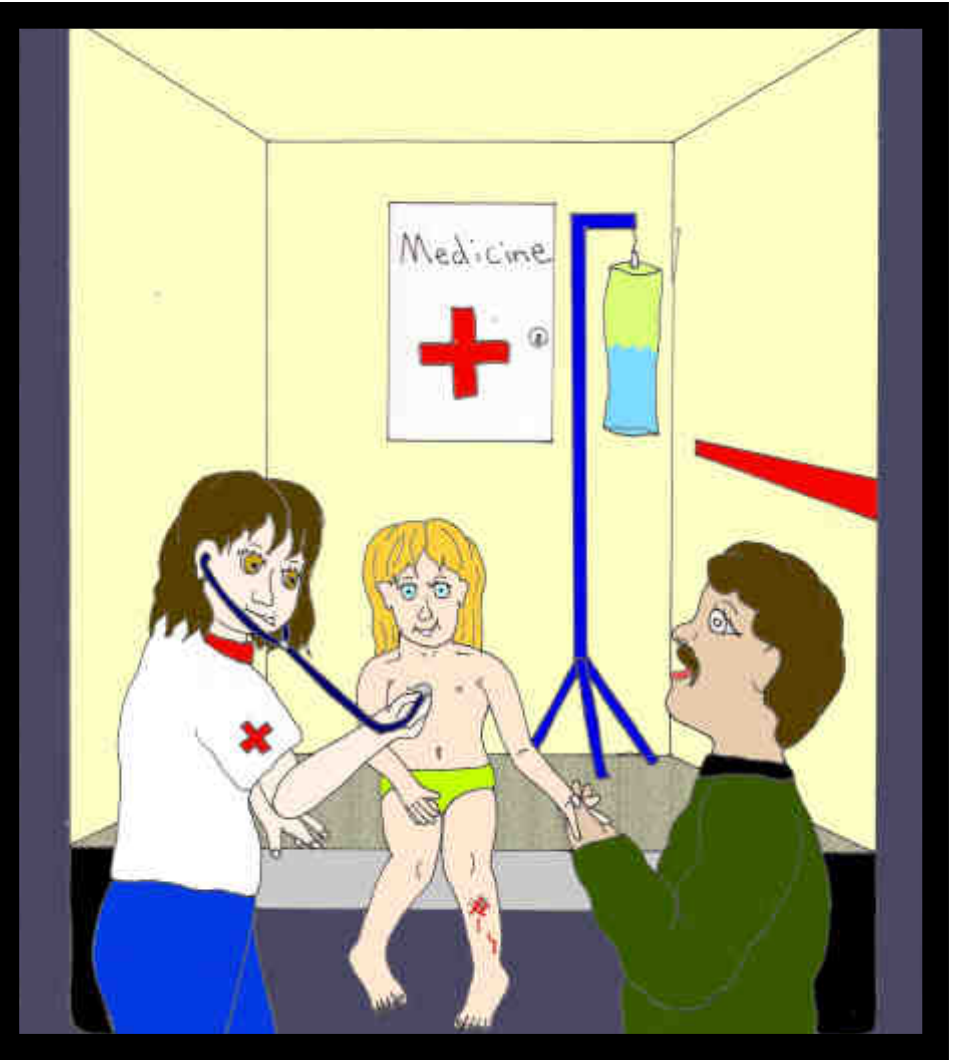
He heard me screaming. He was a little bit scary. He had a big yellow suit on, and a scary mask. He was carrying an axe. I might have been scared and tried to hide from him, but I remembered what I had learned in school. We learned about the uniform firefighters wear, that sometimes looks scary, but keeps them safe. We learned that it is a normal person under that suit, and not to be scared, because they are trying to help us. So I stayed there at the window and wasn't scared.



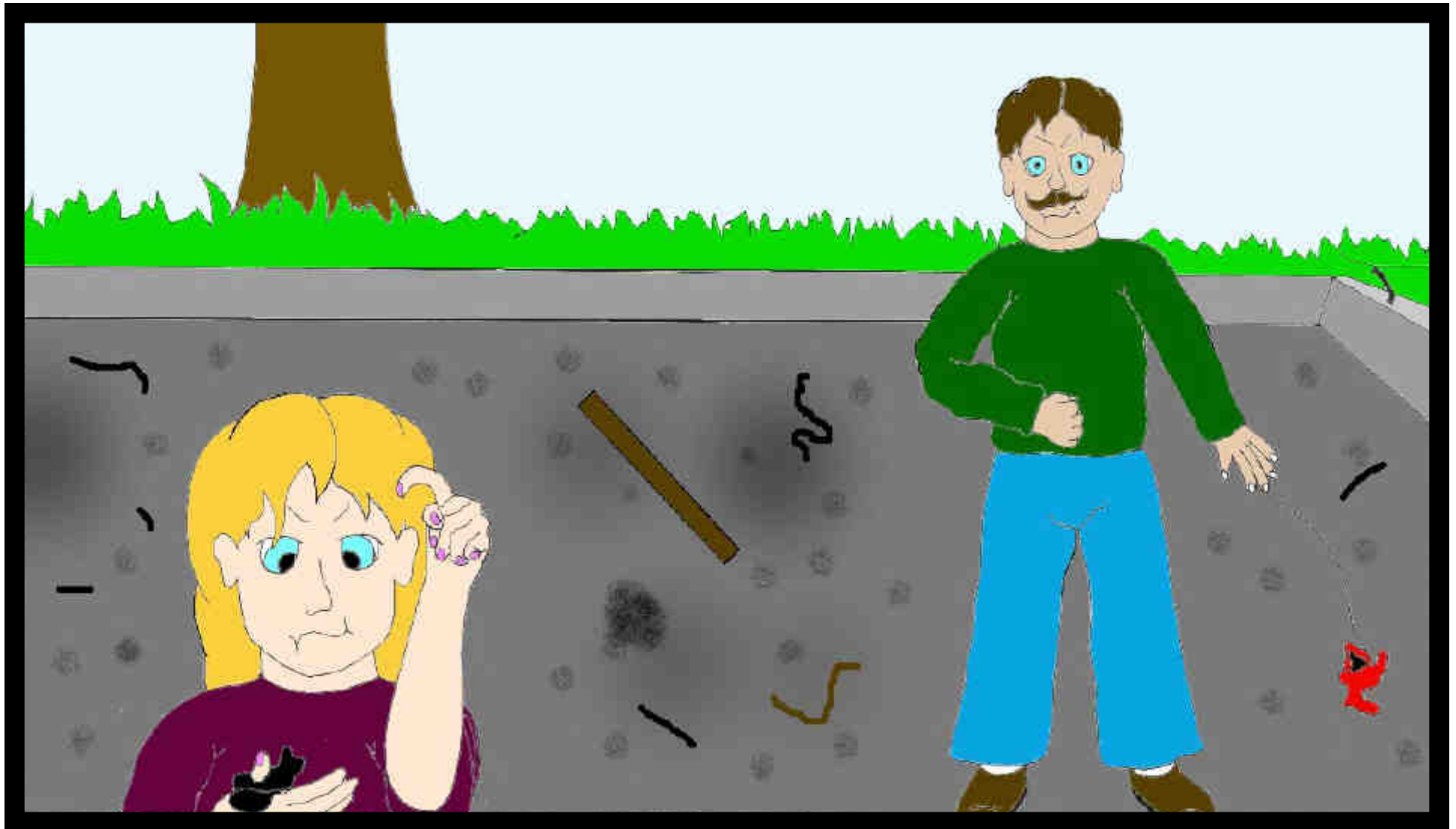
He came up to me, and told me to back up and put my head against the ground and cover my ears and close my eyes. I did that, and as soon as I did, he **smashed** that window to pieces with his Axe. He reached in, picked me up, and pulled me out of the house through the window.



He carried me and ran over to where there were fire trucks and fireman. I could also see my family there. They all ran up and gave me hugs. The firefighters looked at me there. They gave me things to breathe



into. I also had to go to the hospital so they could check me out, but that part was lots of fun. I met some really nice doctors, and the nurses taught me all about the special machines they had at the hospital.



I look at my house now, and I realize how important it was for me to get out quick. To head straight for the doors, without looking for things. If I had waited, the fire would have grown, and I might not have been able to get out at all. I might have just been a spec right here, where my house used to be. That would have been very, very bad.



I'm not sure why my house decided it wanted to catch fires. If *I* were a house, *I* would not want to catch fires. My mommy told me that the fireman said that the stove was broken, and so it gave my house fires.



Well that's it. I hope you enjoyed my story. So remember this, just in case your house ever decides it wants to catch fires, so that you will know what to do, and be safe *just like me!*

Questions For further Discussion:



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1. *In this story, Jenna threw something through the window because she couldn't get it open, couldn't find any other way out of her house, and was trapped inside a room choking on smoke. But should you try to do this unless it's absolutely necessary? What other things should you try first?*

Talking Points: Breaking a window can let you breathe better or allow you to call for help. But it also makes sharp glass that is dangerous too! Always try to open a window before breaking it. If you can open it, climb out to safety if you can do so without hurting yourself. If you must break it, scream for help and try to wait as long as you can for help to come. If you can't wait any longer because the fire is getting too big, use something to break all the glass along the bottom and climb out as carefully as you can!

2. *When Jenna woke up, she thought the annoying sound was a 'beep-bird,' then she remembered it was her fire alarm. Do you know what your fire alarm sounds like? Would you be able to recognize it right away if it went off?*

Talking points: Have your mom and dad set off the fire alarm so you can hear what it sounds like. Tell them to test it while you're sleeping to make sure it wakes you up!

3. *It's always good to know more than one way out of the house, in case one way is blocked. How many ways do you know out of your house? Do you practice fire escapes?*

Talking points: Practicing is fun and easy! Just put on a blindfold, (because in a fire it might be too dark and smoky to see) and then practice fire crawling your way out of the house. It's a fun game to play. See if you can get your parents to time you.

4. *What do you think would have happened if Jenna had spent time looking for her toys or her parents instead of getting out right away?*

Talking points: Point out that adults can manage their own escape. (Parents, you can plan your escape route in a manner that would encounter the kids along the way). Also let children know that firefighters will come to save their toys. If there is not enough time for the toys, there's not enough time for them! Toys are useless if you're not alive to play them.

5. *Why did Jenna crawl low under the smoke? What do you think would have happened if she tried to stand up?*

Talking points: The difference in air temperature from floor to ceiling in a room that's on fire can be over 800 degrees! That's why we stay low-it's breathable down there, but not up high. Smoke also rises, so stay low!

6. *Do you have a meeting spot for your family outside the house?*

Talking points: If not, decide on one with your parents. It should be a safe spot far enough away from the house. You should always go there, so loved ones and rescue workers know you're safe.